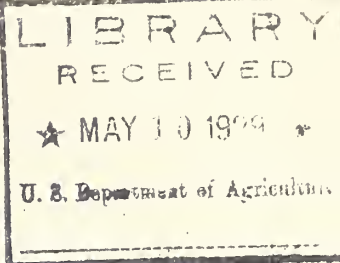


Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Bi-1026
Apr. '29

United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.



COOKING DOMESTIC RABBIT

By FANNIE WALKER YEATMAN, Assistant in Food Preparation, Bureau of Home Economics; and FRANK G. ASHBROOK, in Charge, Division of Fur Resources, Bureau of Biological Survey

THE DOMESTIC RABBIT provides meat that is delicious, tender, and fine flavored. One does not have to wait for the hunting season to open to enjoy rabbit, for there are hundreds of domestic rabbit farms throughout the country where the animals are being raised for the market. Hutch-raised rabbits are produced under the best possible conditions and are marketed while young and tender. Relatively few housewives in the eastern part of the United States are acquainted with the delicious flavor of domestic rabbit meat. Most of them have been accustomed to think of rabbit in terms of the cottontail, the small game animal that is hunted so extensively. Others have thought of rabbit only in terms of jack rabbit, which is even less attractive than the eastern cottontail. When cooked, the meat of wild rabbits is dark and is objected to by some housewives because of "that gamy flavor," and because of the lead shot that persist in getting in one's teeth when eating it.

The industry of raising domestic rabbits is most flourishing in the West, particularly in California, but increasing interest in it is developing in the Eastern States also. The Bureau of Biological Survey maintains a rabbit experiment station in California and has issued several publications in which are recommended the most satisfactory methods of raising rabbits for both food and fur. Hutch-raised rabbits are carefully bred and fed for table use. They eat rolled cereals, alfalfa hay, and leafy vegetables. The nature of their food makes the meat sweet, tender, and excellently flavored. In fact, it can be better compared with chicken than with wild rabbit. Furthermore, rabbits that are raised in small hutches or on fur farms are cleanly in habits and can be produced under sanitary conditions and their diseases and parasites controlled.

Just as with poultry or with various cuts of meat, young tender rabbits may be fried or roasted, while the older ones with tougher muscles require longer, slow cooking. Domestic rabbitries specialize in the "fryer" class of rabbit meat, and this is to be had in animals that are marketed when eight weeks old. The Bureau of Home Economics is conducting experiments in the various methods of preparing domestic rabbit meat for the table and recommends the following recipes:

Young tender rabbits may be fried or broiled, or if just a little larger than the frying and broiling stage, smothered according to the method southern cooks use for chicken. The older, larger rabbits may also be used for short orders by parboiling whole, when cutting into pieces suitable for serving, and frying in batter according to the method given below. Or they may be simmered and served with dumplings or used in chop suey or salad in the same way as chicken.

Fried Rabbit

Make a batter using the following for each rabbit: 1 egg, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt. Beat the egg, add the milk and salt, and stir into the flour to form a smooth batter. Wipe the rabbit with a clean, damp cloth and cut into pieces of the right size for serving. Dip each piece of rabbit into this batter and be sure that it is thoroughly coated. In an iron skillet heat well-flavored fat until it is hot enough to set the batter quickly. Brown the pieces of rabbit evenly, then reduce the heat, and cook at lower temperature for 25 to 30 minutes, or until tender. Serve on a hot platter and garnish with parsley.

Gravy to serve with the rabbit may be prepared as follows: With each 2 tablespoons of the fat in which the rabbit was cooked blend $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons flour and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk. Cook until thickened. Add 1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and a dash of pepper.

Broiled Rabbit

After wiping the rabbit with a clean damp cloth, sprinkle with salt, pepper, and flour; place whole, back down, on a rack in a flat baking pan. Place pieces of butter in the hollow places. Cook in the oven at a moderate temperature (375° to 400° F.) for 40 to 50 minutes, or until tender. Turn the rabbit over, baste with pan drippings, and place under the flame of the broiling oven to brown. Serve the broiled rabbit on a hot platter, and pour over it the drippings mixed with finely chopped parsley.

Smothered Rabbit

Smothered rabbit is prepared in much the same way as broiled. Rub the whole rabbit well with salt, pepper, and flour, and place in a pan with a small quantity of water. Bake in a very moderate oven and baste occasionally with a mixture of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and 2 tablespoons butter. When the meat is tender, set under the flame of a broiling oven for a few minutes to brown. Serve on a hot platter with the gravy that has formed around the rabbit.

Fricassee Rabbit

Cut the rabbit in pieces of suitable size for serving, sprinkle with salt and pepper, dredge with flour, brown in fat, transfer to a baking dish, add a small quantity of water, cover, and cook until tender in a moderate oven. Remove the cover toward the last so as to brown the top pieces.

Rabbit Pie

Cut the rabbit into two or three pieces, place in a saucepan, barely cover with water, cover the pan, and simmer until tender. Add the salt when partially cooked. Drain and measure the liquid and remove the meat from the bones in large pieces. Heat 3 tablespoons butter in a heavy skillet, add 2 tablespoons onion chopped fine, 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, and 2 tablespoons chopped green pepper, and cook for about 3 minutes, stirring frequently. To each cup of liquid use $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons flour, and mix well with the fat and seasoning. Add the liquid and stir until thickened, add more salt if needed and a dash of tabasco. Mix well with the rabbit meat and pour into a baking dish. Cover with a pastry crust and bake in a moderate oven until the crust is golden brown.